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The focus of this paper will be to argue for an effective and concise evaluation of special education programs serving bilingual or limited English proficient (LEP) students. Although Public Law 94-142 specifies that all children be provided with free appropriate education according to their individual needs, ensuring compliance with these requirements has been problematic, particularly in the provision and evaluation of appropriate programs and services to bilingual children. The future success of special education programs serving LEP students will largely depend on the ability to evaluate and communicate the ultimate successes and failures of such programs. In addition, while defining the overall worth of these programs, exemplary services and programs can be identified for dissemination. Advocates of special education for LEP students must engage in evaluation activity for the future of this population. Special educators must realize that evaluation is a requisite in the process of planning and delivering special education services to all populations. (Author)

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THE NEED TO EVALUATE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS SERVING BILINGUAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The Need to Evaluate Special Education Programs Serving Bilingual Students

The focus of this paper will be to argue for an effective and concise evaluation of special education programs serving bilingual or limited English proficient (LEP) students. Although Public Law 94-142 specifies that all children be provided with free appropriate education according to their individual needs, ensuring compliance of these requirements has been problematic, particularly, in the provision and evaluation of appropriate programs and services to bilingual children.

The future success of special education programs serving LEP students will to a large extent depend on the ability to evaluate and communicate the ultimate successes and failures of such programs. In addition, while defining the overall worth of these programs, exemplary services and programs can be identified for dissemination. Advocates of special education for LEP students must engage in evaluation activity for the future of this population. Special educators must realize that evaluation is a requisite in the process of planning and delivering special education services to all populations.

THE NEED TO EVALUATE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS SERVING BILINGUAL STUDENTS

The focus of this paper will be to argue for an effective and concise evaluation of special education programs serving bilingual or limited English proficient (LEP) students. Presently, we do not have much detailed data about the state of the art of special education programming for LEP students. In addition the effects of national and state evaluation systems on programs and services provided to LEP population is unclear. This lack of information is delaying improvement and further development of programs. Decision makers need reliable and valid data that effective evaluation methodologies can provide. The absence of these data ostensibly affects both the quality and type of special education programs offered to bilingual students.

LEGISLATION

The most significant federal legislation to target LEP persons for special education was the Public Law 94-142. Many of the issues expressed in P.L. 94-142 were a direct result of parents and special educators concerned about minority related issues such as inappropriate testing procedures, labeling, disproportionate numbers of culturally diverse children in special education categories and inadequate training of teachers. Some parts of P.L. 94-142 requirements directly focused upon the improvements of services and programs for culturally and linquistically different children.

P.L. 94-142 (under section 618 (a)) specifically stipulated that the impact of the program authorized under this act and the effectiveness of state efforts to assure the free appropriate public education of all handicapped children be measured and evaluated. According to Ballard and Zettel (1977), P.L. 94-142 has several purposes:

(A) insure the availability of special education for children that require it,

(B) insure that fairness and appropriateness are inherent in the decision-making process,

(C) establish clear management and auditing procedures, and

(D) provide financial assistance to the states and local school districts.

In order to evaluate the impact of P.L. 94-142, each state is required to keep records,such as the number of students participating in special education programs, their achievements, and the number of handicapped children who need and are not receiving a free appropriate public education. Using this information as well as other data, the Department of Education is required on an annual basis, to report the impact of P.L. 94-142 to the Congress. The Department must address the following areas: (a) effectiveness of procedures providing handicapped children with educational services in the least restrictive environment, (b) effectiveness of procedures for improving instructional programs for children in day or residential facilities, and (c) effectiveness of procedures that would eliminate or reduce the erroneous classification of children. In order to carry out these analyses and evaluations, the Department is directed to use statistically valid survey techniques and to submit the data collected to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Although P.L. 94-142 specifies that <u>all</u> children be provided with free appropriate education according to their individual needs, ensuring compliance of these requirements has proven problematic (Altschuld & Downhower, 1980), particularly in the provision and evaluation of appropriate programs and services to bilingual children. One of the reasons is that the identification, assessment and placement procedures used by states are relatively crude. Also, the system used to aggregate data at the state and national levels is not sufficiently well organized to identify all of the culturally different pop-

ulations. Indeed, according to Ortiz and Yates (1981), the data indicating incidence rates for Hispanics has proven highly subject to questions of reliability and concurrent validity relative to expected state and national norms. Finally, since the focus on special education programs and services is a relatively new approach to meeting the needs of bilingual students, only a very few states have developed evaluation models and methodologies to judge the merits of these highly specialized programs. In summary, the state of the art of special education programming for bilingual populations is simply too underdeveloped to have fully functional systems of assessment, program development and evaluation in place.

THE NEED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS

The LEP population

The number of LEP persons in the United States has become a major issue in justifying programs, passing legislation, and obtaining funds. The sponsors of P.L. 94-142 recognized that a substantial portion of the LEP population was not being served appropriately by special education programs. The failure of special education to meet the needs of LEP students primarily focused on the language usage of the child. According to Gonzales and Ortiz (1977), the following analysis describes the situation:

> In all cases, when the question arose as to the cause of these failures on the part of the Spanish-speaking child, language emerges as the prime reason for their failure in the school system. Current educational practices insist that all children function in one set of language skills, and yet nothing has been done to accomodate the bilingual child with inadequate English skills. Instead, educators often assume the child will pick up the necessary skills by osmosis. As a result, many of these children have fallen into a pattern of failure and eventually

are referred to special education. This common practice contributed to legitimizing the removal of the culturally and linguistically different child from the mainstream of education (p.334).

As this citation indicates, language is often a significant factor in the educational process of LEP students. The number of persons whose dominant language is not English is quite significant. There are at least 28 million persons in the United States, including about 5 million school-aged children, whose dominant language is not English. The great majority were born in the United States and are citizens. More specifically, about two thirds of these persons and more than four fifths of the school-aged children are native born (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976, 1980). Other findings indicate that 1 person in 8 in the United States has a non-English language background. Furthermore, the specific language background of more than a third of all language minority persons and 60 percent of all school-aged children in this group was Spanish. Persons with Spanish language background numbered 13.2 million in 1980, and their numbers are increasing relative to all other population subgroups. Language minority persons were located in every state; however, 3 out of 5 were located in five states: Arizona, Texas, California, New Mexico, and Colorado. These states, plus New York, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey account for 90 percent of the Spanish language background population.

The above data provide, for the first time, individual states' estimates of current language usage as well as language backgrounds of school-aged children. It is important that this type of data be collected, since statistics and statistical analyses have become a driving force in social and educational policy making. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1980), this type of data is crucial for the following reasons: What problems we address and how

we address them are frequently determined by the availability of numbers and their translation into terms relevant to policy issues and policymakers. The unemployment rate is perhaps the most closely watched of all social indicators, determining where and how resources will be used. It is, then, an issue of fundamental importance that data and analyses are limited concerning the Hispanic population of our Nation and its particular needs. The dearth of information may, indeed, permit "benign neglect" in some cases and misdirected action in others (p.1). As the quote points out, a paucity of data concerning LEP students is of vital importance in better serving this population in special education. The process of evaluation may well be the process that is best suited for the collection of valid and reliable data for decision-makers.

MEETING THEIR NEEDS

The failure of special education to meet the needs of LEP students, given historical data indicating indiscriminate labeling and placement, necessitates a full commitment on the part of special educators to better serve this population. A review of professional literature indicates that minority children are over-represented in the classes for the handicapped, particularly those classes for the mentally retarded (Dunn, 1968; Mercer, 1976). Contrary to this literature, recent research by Ortiz and Yates (1981) indicates that Hispanics in Texas are under-represented in all categories of handicapping conditions with the exception of learning disabilities. In this category, Hispanic students are over-represented by more that 300 percent. Of interest is that 80 percent of Hispanic students eligible for services are placed in either speech therapy or LD programs. Both of these categories are language-related and suggest that educators may be unable to distinguish

linguistic differences from real deficits. Traditional assessment and placement procedures used by special education personnel have resulted in errors in the placement of LEP students into special education. Practitioners are in need of proven procedures that ensure non-biased assessment and placement for LEP students.

One of the most encouraging developments in meeting the need of LEP students are the regulations under P.L. 94-142. The strength of P.L. 94-142 rests in its specific definition of special education, as well as in its detailed recommendations regarding the types of services required to meet the legislated objectives. The act called for specific instructional and curricular programs associated with the training of teacher personnel and the development of "individualized education programs" (Karlitz, 1982). Of particular significance to language minority populations was the inclusion into the legislation of the "native language" descriptor. By including this descriptor, P.L. 94-142 was effectively linked to the Bilingual Education Act. This laid the bases for requiring that bilingual-LEP children be assessed in their primary language. Functionally, this meant that Bilingual-LEP students with possible handicapping conditions must be assessed to determine their native language and further testing must be conducted in the child's primary language. Assessment of any child with possible handicapping conditions can be a difficult task; however, it is particularly difficult to assess a bilingual-LEP child when one considers the few trained bilingual assessment specialist and few assessment instruments specifically developed for this target population.

Although the regulations under P.L. 94-142 have been in existence for several years, much of what has been done in this area has gone unnoticed. This is due to a large measure to limited research, development, dissemination,

and evaluation. These limitations have caused a restricted rate of development and expansion of special education programs serving LEP populations. From the arguments developed above, it appears that the needs of LEP students in special education programs are circumscribed by four major issues: (a) appropriate and accurate assessment procedures (Mendoza, 1983) (b) development across states of systematic special education delivery systems, (c) research and evaluation of programs models serving LEP populations and (d) dissemination of exemplary programs and practices. Each of these problem areas represents an enormous undertaking for professional educators in coming years.

EVALUATION ISSUES

Research has begun to identify what appears to be necessary elements for high-quality special education programs serving LEP exceptional children. For example, Milne (1982) outlined five components that are critical to serving exceptional LEP students. These components are assessment procedures, cultural awareness training of monolingual teachers, curriculum and methodology, learning styles, and parental involvement. The relative newness of program delivery to this exceptional population demands flexibility on the part of special educators, and administrators. Although there is no single "best" program design, it should be feasible to draw on the successful experiences of a number of programs. It falls, then, on the evaluation process to assist program funders, administrators, teachers, students, and parents to better understand the complexities of these new programs and services. Through high-quality evaluations, scarce resources may best be put to use to ensure the most appropriate service delivery continuum at local levels.

House (1976) states that the process of evaluation is a tool in deciding who gets what:

Evaluation is by its nature a political activity. It serves decision-

makers, results in reallocation of resources and legitimizes who gets what. It is intimately implicated in the distribution of basic goods in society. It is more that a statement of ideas, it is a social mechanism for distribution, one which aspires to institutional status. (p.76)

Bilingual education programs and more recently special education programs serving bilingual students can be classified as innovative and nontraditional. Because of the recency of these types of programs, these programs have presented evaluators with practical and theoretical considerations previously unencountered. According to Gonzalez and Baumanis (1981), evaluators have been faced with the following questions:

1. How can a practical evaluation be operationalized on a nationwide basis?
2. How can we measure the success of a specialized academic-social change program that may well be influenced by variables hitherto unmeasured - or perhaps unidentified?

The persistence of evaluators to use traditional objective-based evaluation approaches is largely due to federal and state policies requesting quantifiable, objective data. These policies have affected not only special education and bilingual education but almost every educational program receiving federal funds. Gonzalez and Baumanis (1981) state that the traditional or behavioral objective approaches of evaluation are based on the assumption that all learning outcomes are measurable, i.e. quantifiable. The traditional model emphasizes student preformance, mastery ability, and aptitudes; progress is measured through utilization of specified behavioral objectives and the use of standardized tests. However, it has often been stated (Olmedo, 1977; Oakland, 1973) that testing of minority children has been linguistically,

culturally and ethnically biased. P.L. 94-142 assured the use of the students' native language when being tested and required the use of culturally appropriate testing instruments.

Although the literature relating to evaluation theory and research is much richer and more sophisticated today than it was a decade ago, actual results of evaluation studies indicate that from an evaluation perspective, many of the problems posed by the structural as well as theoretical intricacies of the innovative programs remain unresolved. Even so, recent literature (Berke, 1983; Weiss, 1977) indicates that evaluations of innovative programs have significantly influenced policymaking. Federal regulations mandating accountability (i.e., P.L. 94-142) require evaluation to produce empirical evidence on program impact. The evaluation data collected in response to these mandates become the basis for far-reaching decisions regarding maintenance, institutionalization and expansion of successful programs, as well as modification or elimination of unsuccessful ones.

Special education programs aimed at bilingual students encounter problems associated with many other federally mandated efforts. It has most of the problems common to nonethnically oriented programs - specifically those relating to (1) diversity, obscurity and conflict of goals, and (2) the lack of clarity regarding assessment framework and proven interventions. Unlike other programs and very similar to the more established bilingual education programs, special education for bilingual students adds a complex dimension to the other difficulties by introducing still another reality - teaching and evaluating in <u>two</u> languages. Language development and testing of LEP students have been the critical debates among bilingual and special educators. Cohen (1980) lists several relevant questions:

1. Is a child's oral language development as important as (or more important than) reading development?

2. Should oral language skills be used to identify a child's dominant language?
3. Should an assessment of oral language be based on receptive language abilities or productive language abilities?
4. Should reading skills development and oral language development be related in a program?
5. Should a program emphasize oral language development in Spanish, oral language development in English, or both?
6. Can there be parallel oral language development in two languages? (p.36)

Again, language with respect to special education plays a critical part in serving LEP students and in the evaluation of these services. The following data sources can be used in assessing successes of special education programs serving LEP students. These areas may potentially provide a basis for administrators and program evaluators who desire to initiate or improve special education for LEP students:

1. appropriate needs assessment
2. appropriate referral of bilingual and LEP students to special education
3. appropriate language assessment (dominance and proficiency)
4. appropriate non-biased intelligence testing
5. appropriate involvement of staff in the development of IEP's
6. appropriate and specific IEP's
7. appropriate instruction and curriculum
8. appropriate entry-exit criteria
9. behavior of students, including attendance, learning rate and achievement levels
10. contextual changes, i.e. institutionalization, parent attitudes, teacher attitudes and so on

11. appropriate training and in-service of personnel, and

12. program management and organization

The number and complexity of the variables suggest an urgent need for the conceptual and technical development of evaluation procedures to assist funders, administrators, teachers, students and parents to better understand the complexities demanded of these programs and services. Although federal legislation has increased the development of special education programs aimed at LEP students, there is no evaluation evidence that has focused on the operation of these programs, the instructional practices, or the effects on the students.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As stated earlier, special education programs and services for all populations are to be evaluated as stipulated in P.L. 94-142. Although this evaluation mandate has not focused on programs serving LEP students, it is likely to receive increased attention in future years. This is due to the increased number of LEP students that will be receiving special education in the 1980's and 1990's. Support for this contention also exists in the value placed on evaluation by special and general administrators at a time of declining enrollments and fiscal resources. Evaluation results can and most likely will provide the needed rationale to aid in making difficult decisions among program alternatives, as well as suggesting more cost efficient ways of conducting other programs.

Another issue that may have a substantial impact on future use of evaluation results is that of evaluation methodology. In view of the recency of special education programs serving LEP students, it can be assumed that the major uses of evaluation will be oriented toward increasing understanding about these programs rather than directly and solely influencing decision-

making. If this orientation is accepted, then the evaluation method most suited to that end is the qualitative or naturalistic method (Gonzalez & Baumanis, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1980). According to Tymitz (1983), the naturalistic approach to evaluation of bilingual special education programs is a favorable alternative (not a substitute) to the traditional quantitative methodology.

The flexibility of the naturalistic inquiry contrasts markedly with the traditional evaluation approach. The naturalistic approach attempts to arrive at an understanding rather than at providing an explanation or validation to prespecified theories or hypothesis. Stake (1975) describes his case study approach to evaluation as follows:

1. It orients more directly to program activities than program interest,
2. it responds to audience requirements for information, and
3. the different value-perspectives are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program. (p.8)

According to Stake (1975), a naturalistic approach stresses the complex, holistic, and multiple variables that affect the programs. While the traditional approach dictates presentation of quantifiable data in formal written reports, the presentation of the naturalistic approach might assume a variety of forms, e.g., written reports, simulated programs interactions, films, taped activities, etc. The aim of the report is to increase the understanding of what is really going on in the program.

Tymitz (1983) gives three recommendations for future evaluations of special education programs serving LEP students:

First - given that program goals involve both process and product outcomes, the design of the evaluation strategies to collect and assess data must become more congruent with the phenomena under

study. It is critical that study designs have the capacity to evaluate the many different ways children learn and develop and that studies are able to capture and portray the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of all program participants.

Second - rather than a preoccupation with fault-finding, evaluation must engage in the far more difficult task of understanding and describing program effects in their entirety.

Third - as bilingual special education continues to develop, evaluation designs must attend to the philosophical, applied research, and legal issues that confront practitioners. (p.367)

Although the mandate for inclusion of LEP populations in special education has existed since the 1975 passage of P.L. 94-142, the systematic provisions of the programs and services has progressed slowly. A clear conception of the scope and severity of the problem can only be made possible through comprehensive multiple-year evaluations of those programs and services at state and local levels.

CONCLUSION

The future success of special education programs serving LEP students will to a large extent depend on the ability to evaluate and communicate the ultimate successes and failures of such programs. In addition, while defining the overall worth of these programs, exemplary services and programs can be identified for dissemination. Advocates of special education for LEP students must engage in evaluation activity for the future of this population. Special educators must realize that evaluation is a requisite in the process of planning and delivering special education services to all populations.

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